The Testimony of
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To

Committee on Government Reform
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, distinguished guests, and

Committee Staff Members, thank you for inviting me here today to provide

insights on the importance of telework in continuity of operations planning for

both government and industry.

I am Dr. Jim Kane, President and CEO of the Systems and Software

Consortium, Inc. or SSCI (formerly the Software Productivity Consortium,

SPC). SSCI was founded under the National Cooperative Research Act in 1985

to enable U.S. companies to collaborate, in a noncompetitive and nonproprietary

The Systems
and Software
Consortium
way, on solutions to common challenges faced in building high-quality, reliable

software-intensive systems. We are a not-for-profit organization, and our

membership of 80 companies, government agencies, and universities includes

the largest federal prime contractors. These prime contractors employ over

600,000 people and over $135 billion in sales.

Our focus on helping our members to implement best practices within and

among their large operations around the country, along with our expertise in

managing technology insertion programs, and our position as a national "open

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forum" all dovetailed with the telework interests of the Honorable Frank Wolf, our Congressional representative, in the summer of 2001.

As we all know, Mr. Wolf has long been a champion of promoting telework within the federal government. In our conversations with Mr. Wolf in 2001, we recognized that SSCI's focus on collaborative solutions for distributed workers and work teams aligned well with the federal telework mission. Mr. Wolf sponsored the formation of the Telework Consortium during the summer and early fall of 2001. He continues to be an advocate of federal telework initiatives and the work of the Telework Consortium, which is housed and hosted by SSCI.

About the Telework Consortium

Since its opening in October, 2001, the Telework Consortium has facilitated numerous pilot projects and demonstrations of technologies and business practices that enable high-bandwidth collaboration and information-sharing among workers, regardless of their physical location, to perform routine business operations that historically have been viewed as location-dependent.

Two Key Insights

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 occurred during the formation of Congressman Wolf's telework initiative, and served to make absolutely clear the pressing national need for a more distributed and secure workforce, able to continue the nation's business in the face of catastrophic disruptions. I am therefore pleased to be here today to offer two key insights as inputs to the Committee's deliberations, and to offer two modest recommendations that I believe can significantly contribute to the successful integration of telework-based solutions in Continuity of Operations plans.

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A contemporary concept of telework

My first insight corresponds to the Committee's interest in the respective roles of OPM and GSA for implementing telework programs. Specifically, my first insight is to be "clear on the concept" of telework. The phrase Telework as used by OPM and GAO is referred by them as telecommuting and/or flexiplace, and conveys the image of a solitary remote worker connected to a central worksite. This is in dramatic contrast to the more contemporary concept of telework which is the systematic deployment of spatially-distributed, collaborative teams using contemporary telecommunications to perform routine business activities. Contemporary telecommunications has given us the opportunity to fundamentally change how we work, and is taking the "place" out of the word "workplace."   If you doubt this walk through an airport, watch ads on TV from information technology and telecommunications companies, or even stop by your neighborhood Starbucks. Are these people "teleworking" or are they simply working in a more contemporary way?

Contemporary telework and Continuity of Operations plans

Accordingly, this Committee's concern should not be merely whether an agency has telework in their Continuity of Operations plan, but rather whether they are clear on the concept of contemporary telework practices. Is the role of telework in their Continuity of Operations plans to support solitary workers or collaborative management teams? Is it predicated on outdated concepts of bandwidth availability and simple hub-and-spoke architectures or high-bandwidth connectivity in rich mesh architectures?   Do they see telework as merely a mechanism for text communication or rich, interactive video experience on laptop computers?

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If past is prologue in this area, yes we'll have lip service to telework as an element of Continuity of Operations plans, but the plans and guidance will be equivalent to guidance on adjusting rabbit ears on the TV to get three channels of network television.

My second insight is offered from the perspective of the Committee's interest in the plans of individual agencies for incorporating telework in their Continuity of Operations plans. Pilot deployments of telework solutions are essential for successful, larger-scale implementations. If there is one thing we have learned at the Telework Consortium over the past three years it is the critical importance of executing smaller-scale pilot projects as part of agency telework initiatives.

Implement pilot projects to ensure success

As a CEO I recognize the importance of plans. But plans are meaningless without the knowledge on how to execute those plans, and the required budget and resources to actually implement those plans. Against that backdrop I would refer you to the GAO Report of July 2003 (GAO-03-679) on "Further Guidance, Assistance and Coordination Can Improve Federal Telework Efforts", and specifically to Figure 1 on page five of the report. The Figure lists 25 key telework practices for implementation of successful Federal Telework programs. Yet nowhere does it say anything about actually implementing pilot projects as a key success factor.

We at the Telework Consortium have learned that pilot projects are essential. They enable us to ensure that the appropriate technology is deployed, and that adequate budget and resources are in place. But even more important is that

Pilot projects provide insights for participants

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pilots enable the participants to see and experience what is now possible, particularly in terms of their ability to collaborate with one another. It is the behavior of people more than the performance of technology that enables telework-based support to execute the agency mission, whether in normal times or emergency operations.

We've seen this time and time again with TIGTA at the Treasury, with Loudoun County Magazine, with the NOVA Medical Group, and currently with the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors. All these organizations have benefited from pilots in which participants discovered new ways of conducting their business. In addition, our staff consistently finds during pilot implementations that minor adjustments to well-developed plans can have dramatic impacts on how participants embrace the capabilities available to them.

Pilot to projects demonstrate credibility

Therefore, in evaluating reports as to whether agencies have a telework policy and whether Telework and Continuity of Operations plans are coordinated, the real issue is not whether they are coordinated on paper but whether they've been tried in practice. The Committee should not place false confidence in the few agencies that have at least coordinated telework and their Continuity of Operations plan. If the agency is not already running pilots, confidence in that agency's ability to support Continuity of Operations could be misleading,

Leverage the Telework Consortium

Let me offer two modest recommendations. First, leverage what you already have in place and have invested in. The two insights I shared with you earlier reflect the extensive experience and insights of the professional staff of the Telework Consortium.   The Telework Consortium is objective, neutral, and

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authoritative.   Despite the personal efforts of Representative Wolf, and the continued interest of Representative Davis, agencies, with few exceptions, are not taking advantage of the Telework Consortium as a resource. We may not have all the answers, but we certainly have plenty of experience to offer. I would recommend to the Committee that agencies use the Telework Consortium as a resource for their telework programs and to ensure they get maximum benefits from the pilot projects they should conduct.

Create a National Center

My final recommendation is that given the insights I shared with you today, I would again, as I recommended in my previous appearance before you, encourage you to consider establishing a National Center for Distributed Work. While it is amazing what Congressman Wolf's small efforts have been able to accomplish, we are now experiencing a technology revolution that will affect how we work and where we work.   A National Center for Distributed Work could focus on pilot implementations of contemporary telework-based solutions in a Continuity of Operations environment.   This could provide valuable information to both government and industry on how to assure an increasingly safe, adaptive and productive work environment.

In closing, I thank you again, Mr. Chairman, the entire Committee, and your staff members for allowing me to share our telework experience with you today.

Respectfully Submitted:

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James A. Kane Ph.D.
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